

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA



CHESTERFIELD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

P. O. Box 100
Chesterfield, Virginia 23832



SAFE CONTROL OF HEAD LICE RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES October 2007

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Head lice are parasites. They are small, wingless insects that live on people because they need body warmth and to feed on the scalp in order to survive. Head lice do not spread disease and can happen to everyone as nobody is immune. Head-to-head contact is needed for the head lice to travel from one person to another. Hugging, telling secrets, sharing sweaters, hats or hair items occurs often in the younger child who tends to be friendlier.

- Head lice can survive away from the human body for about 24 - 48 hours.
- Head lice do not live on pets.
- Head lice do not fly or jump. They do not crawl long-distances.
- Feeding causes itching of the scalp.
- Adult female lice attach their eggs, called nits, to the hair shafts close to the scalp. Nits hatch within 7 to 10 days and the new lice grow into adults in about 2 weeks.
- Nits are small yellow or pearly white oval-shaped eggs attached firmly to the hair. They do not pull off easily. Nits may survive up to one week but will not hatch at the lower temperature away from the scalp.
- Some treatments kill the lice but not the nits so re-treatment after 7 days may be necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HEAD LICE:

Head lice require special treatment. Before using any lice product, answer these questions:

	Has your child been treated for head lice in the past month?
	Does your child have asthma, allergies, epilepsy, AIDS, cancer, or other illness?
	Is your child currently or recently been on medication?
	Is your home treated by a monthly exterminator or frequent bug bombs?
	Is the person applying the treatment pregnant or nursing?
	Is the child under the age of 2?

If you or your child can answer yes to one of the above questions you should call your doctor or local health department for advice. No lice products should be used on pregnant women, nursing mothers, or children under the age of two without seeing a doctor first. Chemical treatments are pesticides that when absorbed can build up in the human body and may cause harm.

STEP ONE-INSPECT:

Check all family members for head lice. Start by looking at the back of the neck, behind the ears and then move to the top of the head. Look carefully at each section of the entire head. Bright light or natural daylight and magnified reading glasses might help you see the lice and nits:

- Lice are small and about the size of a sesame seed. They move quickly and are sometimes hard to see.
 - Nits are tiny yellowish-white oval eggs that are firmly attached to the hair close to the scalp.
- If you find any lice *or* nits, go to the second step.

STEP TWO –TREAT:

Only treat those family members who have lice or nits. Treat them at the same time. Do not treat those who do not have lice or nits as it does not prevent them from getting it and may cause harm. Choose an over-the-counter lice treatment from your local pharmacy. Commonly used treatments are NIX® and RID®. Both are acceptable and *EITHER ONE BUT NOT BOTH* may be used to treat your family. See comparison chart of common available products below. Resistance to some over-the-counter products appears to be emerging. For this reason, it is important to use the products properly. Before and after treating, keep product away from children. If swallowed, get medical help or contact the Poison Control Center right away (804-828-9123 Local Richmond, or 800-222-1222 Toll Free).

****IMPORTANT-READ AND FOLLOW ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS AS DIRECTED INCLUDED IN THE PACKAGE FOR EFFECTIVE TREATMENT.***

RID®	NIX®
Pyrethrins (pie-WREATH-rins)	Permethrin (per-meth-rin)
SHAMPOO	CREAM RINSE
<i>Do not wash hair</i>	<i>Wash hair without conditioners</i>
<i>Use on dry hair</i>	<i>Use on damp hair towel dried</i>
Use entire bottle per person completely saturating hair and scalp	Use entire bottle per person completely saturating hair and scalp
Leave on hair 10 minutes	Leave on hair 10 minutes
Rinse hair, do not use shampoo for 1-2 days after treatment	Rinse hair, do not use shampoo for 1-2 days after treatment
Avoid using hair products for 7-10 days after treatment	Avoid using hair products for 7-10 days after treatment
Comb after treatment and every day for 7 days	Comb after treatment and every day for 7 days
<i>MUST re-treat in 7-10 days</i>	<i>Retreat in 7-10 days only if live lice is present</i>

Protect the person's eyes. Have the infested person put on clothing that can be removed without pulling it over the head after treatment. Remove clothing after treatment and wash immediately in hot water and dry for at least 20 minutes in a dryer on the hot cycle.

If using NIX® a single treatment may be effective in eliminating head lice infestation. Most of the lice will be killed immediately. The remaining lice and nits have absorbed enough chemical to make

them eventually die. As you may see lice for a few days after treatment with NIX®, they will not be able to reproduce or re-infest others.

STEP THREE- COMB:

This step is *extremely important* and a key to ending lice infestation. No lice treatment alone will get rid of head lice completely. Lice shampoos do not remove the eggs from the hair. The eggs must be combed out. Remove the nits with proper daily combing. Combs with metal teeth spaced close together work best. General guidelines for combing:

1. Comb out any remaining lice and nits at least once each day, for 7 days.
2. Hold the comb with the flat side resting in your fingertips. Make sure that the teeth are facing you.
3. Lift a small strand of hair (about 1/4" thick). Begin combing in a 'scooping' motion: gently push the teeth as close to the hair roots as possible and drag comb firmly from the roots to the ends of the hair (newly-laid eggs are found near the roots of the hair, so it is important to get the teeth very close to the scalp). Make sure the teeth are deeply embedded into the strands as you comb through.
4. Always comb away from the head. Wipe eggs & nits from the teeth of the comb with a tissue or paper towel. Discard all the used tissues or cloths into a bag and dispose of when combing procedure is done.
5. Pin back the 1/4-inch strand you just finished combing with a bobby pin or hair clip.
6. Lift up another 1/4-inch strand and repeat the combing procedure.
7. Continue to comb hair 1/4 inch at a time until entire head has been combed and pinned.
8. Continue to check all treated persons for 2 - 3 weeks to be certain all lice and nits are gone. As the hair grows, eggs imbedded in the scalp will grow out and need to be removed.

Note: It is very important to remove the nits and eggs in order to end the cycle of infestation.

STEP FOUR-CLEAN:

Treating for lice and removal of nits on your child and infested family members at the same time is the most important way to get rid of lice in your family. It is important to clean the environment the same day to help reduce the chances of becoming reinfested.

Laundry:

- Wash all items the infested family member has been in contact with in the past two days such as towels, pillowcases, sheets, pajamas, clothes, coats, hats and similar items in very hot water, then dry for at least 20 minutes in a dryer on the hot cycle, if possible.
- Dry clean all clothing that cannot be washed or seal in a large plastic bag for 14 days.
- Stuffed animals and pillows should be washed or placed in a large plastic bag and kept sealed in the bag for 14 days.

Hair items:

- Wash combs, brushes, hair ribbons, barrettes, and hair items in hot soapy water (at least 130 degrees) or soak in rubbing alcohol or Lysol® for 1 hour.

Vacuum:

- Vacuum house carpet, mattress and furniture.
- Vacuum cars and especially car seats.
- Dispose of the vacuum cleaner bag when finished.

IMPORTANT: Spraying or fogging a home with insecticides is NOT recommended. They can be harmful, if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

READMISSION TO SCHOOL:

Your child may be readmitted to school after treatment has been done. Please complete the enclosed check-list and return it to the clinic assistant when you bring your child to school the next day. The clinic assistant will check your child's head that morning. If further combing is required, your child may not be readmitted until there is improvement.

YOUR CHILD MAY HAVE TO BE NIT FREE BEFORE BEING READMITTED TO SCHOOL.

Permethrin and Pyrethrum may no longer be completely effective in the treatment of head lice. Therefore, if live lice are still seen after two treatments, and you are sure you have used the preparation correctly, it is recommended that you contact your doctor for alternate treatments, some that may possibly require a prescription.

If you have any questions about these recommendations, please call:

- Chesterfield Health Department - School Health Services 748-1633

William R. Nelson, M.D., M.P.H., Director
[Signature on file] October 15, 2007

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